

**ARIZONA STATE VETERINARY MEDICAL EXAMINING BOARD**  
1740 W. ADAMS ST., SUITE 4600, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007  
PHONE (602) 364-1PET (1738) FAX (602) 364-1039  
VETBOARD.AZ.GOV

received  
8/22/19

**COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION FORM**

If there is an issue with more than one veterinarian please file a  
separate Complaint Investigation Form for each veterinarian

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

Date Received: Aug 22, 2019

Case Number: 20-12

**A. THIS COMPLAINT IS FILED AGAINST THE FOLLOWING:**

Name of Veterinarian/CVT: Robert J Thrift

Premise Name: Bell Animal & Bird Hospital

Premise Address: 4336 W Bell Rd #7

City: Glendale State: AZ Zip Code: 85308

Telephone: (602) 978-4331

**B. INFORMATION REGARDING THE INDIVIDUAL FILING COMPLAINT\*:**

Name: Paula Hunter~Jefery Johnson

Address:

City:  State:  Zip Code:

Home Telephone:  Cell Telephone:

\*STATE LAW REQUIRES WE HAVE TO DISCLOSE YOUR NAME UNLESS WE CAN SHOW THAT DISCLOSURE WILL RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL HARM TO YOU, SOMEONE ELSE OR THE PUBLIC PER A.R.S. § 41-1010. IF YOU HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SUBSTANTIAL HARM WILL RESULT IN DISCLOSURE OF YOUR NAME PLEASE PROVIDE COPIES OF RESTRAINING ORDERS OR OTHER DOCUMENTATION.

**C. PATIENT INFORMATION (1):**Name: MadonnaBreed/Species: Hybrid MacawAge: 35 Sex: Female Color: Blue & Gold**PATIENT INFORMATION (2):**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Breed/Species: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Color: \_\_\_\_\_

**D. VETERINARIANS WHO HAVE PROVIDED CARE TO THIS PET FOR THIS ISSUE:***Please provide the name, address and phone number for each veterinarian.*

Dr. Kate @ Muleshoe Animal Clinic PO Box 693 Yarnell, AZ

**E. WITNESS INFORMATION:***Please provide the name, address and phone number of each witness that has direct knowledge regarding this case.*

Jef and I and several assistants in his office. There were 3 young women.

**Attestation of Person Requesting Investigation**

By signing this form, I declare that the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Further, I authorize the release of any and all medical records or information necessary to complete the investigation of this case.

Signature: P. J. L.Date: Aug 22, 2019

**F. ALLEGATIONS and/or CONCERNS:**

*Please provide all information that you feel is relevant to the complaint. This portion must be either typewritten or clearly printed in ink.*

Reached out to this vet office as I have not needed the care of an AVIAN vet in the last 20 years. I have a vet in California. But had no need to establish care in AZ. Found Dr Thrift on Internet under Avian specialist.

Dr was disorganized, unable to complete procedures with out some difficulty, created undue stress on bird due to "forgetting" parts of the procedures in order to run lab tests for which I believed were bacterial issues. In the past I used to breed several species of parrots.

The entire visit which took close to 2 hrs was constantly punctuated by "What are you feeding her?"...Which we answered more than 4 times. High quality safflower based seed from a supplier in San Diego, fruits, veggies, random mix of bread products, high fat nuts, etc.

Dr Thrift and staffed almost "bullied" us into buying an OUT OF DATE bag of Harrison's Bird Feed. I have since researched it, am supplementing with it, but bought a fresh bag through Amazon.

The visit was on a Friday, Aug 9, 2019.

There were 2 calls rom Dr Thrift during the week with no lab results and with no information other than WHAT FOOD DO YOU FEED? It became so incessant I hollered at him...IVE told you 10 times.

Began asking about lab results through assistant who answered phone on Aug 19, 2019. No response or call back from Dr Thrift. . Phone to vet has no VM and is often unanswered during supposed business hours.

Again on Aug 20, finally pressured the assistant to send me labs that were in office. No call or follow up from Dr Thrift. Was told the FUNGAL portion "may" be in that afternoon. I was called at 5PM, (no answer when I called the office at 4pm) and listened to a rambling, sometimes making no sense, Dr Thrift about possible cloaca carcinoma and may need to bring her for biopsies.

I had read the bacterial lab results that morning and had also sent them to the California vet for review and confirmed there was a serious bacterial infection.

When I asked Dr Thrift about the bacterial infection and how it had now been 11 days since he had seen her and that I was anxious to get a round of antibiotics prescribed as soon as possible. I was told I would have to bring her in every day for injections. When I explained I was a nurse and understood injections I was told I had to do a sub q. and thus NO. OK. Is there a form of compounded antibiotic? Something oral? Dr Thrift told me an oral medication was very expensive and would cost me \$500. I had some difficulty believeing that due to my own basic medical background.

I recieved no concrete answer and then he started wanting to biopsy her cloaca. I asked for a written treatment plan so I could get a 2nd opinion and hopefully confer with my dog & horse vet as to a treatment plan that I could follow up on myself. I have never been in such an odd situation as this. To date I have not heard from Dr Thrift.

I contacted my dog & horse vet at Hassayampa Vet Clinic in Wickenburg and I was referred to Muleshoe in Yarnell as the vet has knowledge of exotics.

I took the bird to her on Aug 21, had forwarded the labs & notes, was prescribed an oral antibiotic.

My concern is the lack of a treatment plan, my feeling as if he just wanted us to come back and come back some more. I was told medication would be very expensive and that he had to do injections only. I am also concerned for other clients that may not have enough knowledge to question this odd veterinarian. There were no other clients in his office for the 2 hours we were there and the phone did not ring. I was suspicious

from the start but how does one just turn and walk out. I had concerns that the blood samples and swaps were not compromised due to his odd fumbling inability to organize. This may not be a valid complaint but I feel strongly enough to mention the ordeal as some birds would have died in the 11 days for the labs and then the NONE ability to prescribe a treatment plan, medication called for in the lab and communicate that to the client. Thank you.



Paula Hunter

Jefery Johnson

September 10, 2019

Arizona State Veterinary Medical Examining Board  
1740 West Adams Street, Suite 4600  
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

In re: Robert Thrift (20-12)

Dear Board Members:

On August 9<sup>th</sup> 2019, Jeff Johnson and Paula Hunter from Wickenburg, AZ presented Madonna a 35-year-old Macaw parrot with a history of chronic diarrhea for 30 days. This was the only time that I saw this pet. I was told that she had been on a high fat seed diet from California. I recommended blood tests, cultures and Harrison's pellet bird food. As my technician was bringing out the Harrison's pellet bird food, she noticed that the expiration date on the food was approaching and so she mentioned this to the owners and went back and exchanged the pellets for a fresh bag. At no time were expired food pellets sold or dispensed to the owner.

On August 12<sup>th</sup> 2019, I called the owners to discuss the results of the blood work. It showed signs of mild stress which could have been due to diet, husbandry, fear, or excitement. Alternatively, the report analysis stated that the bird may have an "initial/low bacterial infection". Madonna had been eating the Harrison pellets for only a few days but the stool was still loose. My tentative diagnosis was a viral cloacal papilloma, poor nutrition and possible secondary bacterial infection. We were still waiting on the culture results at this time but I recommended continuing with the Harrison food diet.

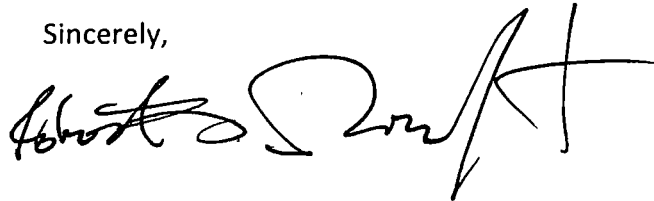
On August 14<sup>th</sup> 2019 at 10:30 a.m. I placed a follow-up call to the owners and asked if Madonna still had diarrhea. Mr. Johnson said he didn't know. I also asked if she still had the cloacal mass. He said he didn't know that either. He said the droppings were firm part of the day other times they were a little loose.

Later, on August 14<sup>th</sup> I received a fax with the culture results and called the owner to discuss them. The bacterial cultures found the following bacteria: Klebsiella, E coli, and Pseudomonas. Possible treatments included Enrofloxacin (Baytril) and Piperacillin/Taz. I thought Piperacillin/Taz would be a good choice but my supplier said they didn't carry it. It would have to be a special order and it would cost \$200-300. At this time, we were still waiting on the fungal culture. Because it appeared that the loose stools were improving. I instructed the owners to stay on the Harrison pellets and to keep checking on the droppings.

I called the owners again on August 20<sup>th</sup> 2019 at 10:45 a.m. but only got an answering machine. An earlier message requested lab results and records and those were faxed to her. I called the lab to check on the status of the fungal culture and they indicated that it would be out later that day. The results were given verbally to me over phone that there were no growths.

With regard to the claim that I never provided a definitive treatment plan, I was not in a position to do that until the culture results were obtained but we did discuss a potential treatment plan that would include antibiotics, Peperacillin/Taz 120mg BID inter muscular or Enrofloxacin, Baytril 18mg Q 24hours SQ In a Fluid Pouch or Enrofloxacin Oral in a Grape Syrup from Diamond Backs Drugs. That is in my medical record that was sent to the owner. I also discussed a cloacal biopsy to confirm a diagnosis of a Viral Cloacal Papilloma. Before any of those could be performed, Ms. Hunter said that she wanted a second opinion from her California veterinarian. I never heard from her again until I received this complaint.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Thrift', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Robert Thrift, DVM



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**INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT**

**TO:** Arizona State Veterinary Medical Board

**FROM:** AM Investigative Committee: Robert Kritsberg, DVM - Chair  
Christina Tran, DVM  
Carolyn Ratajack  
Jarrod Butler, DVM  
Steve Seiler

**STAFF PRESENT:** Tracy A. Riendeau, CVT – Investigations  
Dawn Halbrook – Compliance Specialist  
Mary Williams – Assistant Attorney General

**RE:** Case: 20-12  
Complainant(s): Paula Hunter/Jefery Johnson  
Respondent(s): Robert Thrift, DVM (License: 1204)

**SUMMARY:**

Complaint Received at Board Office: 8/22/19  
Committee Discussion: 11/5/19  
Board IIR: 1/15/20

**APPLICABLE STATUTES AND RULES:**

Laws as Amended August 2018  
(Lime Green); Rules as Revised September  
2013 (Yellow).

On August 9, 2019, "Madonna," a 35-year-old female Hybrid Macaw was presented to Respondent for chronic diarrhea. The bird was examined and diagnostics were recommended. A diet change was also recommended. Respondent's tentative diagnosis was viral cloacal papilloma, poor nutrition and possible secondary bacterial infection.

Complainants expressed concerns with Respondent's disorganization, trying to sell them out dated food and not returning phone calls.

**Complainants were noticed and did not appear.**

**Respondent was noticed and appeared with Counsel, W. Reed Campbell.**

**The Committee reviewed medical records, testimony, and other documentation as described below:**

- Complainant(s) narrative: Paula Hunter/Jefery Johnson
- Respondent(s) narrative/medical record: Robert Thrift, DVM
- Consulting Veterinarian(s) narrative/medical record: Kathryn McCullough, DVM

**PROPOSED 'FINDINGS of FACT':**

1. On August 9, 2019, the bird was presented to Respondent due to chronic diarrhea for 30 days. Complainants reported that the bird had been eating a high quality safflower based seed, fruits, vegetables and a random mix of bread products.
2. Respondent examined the bird; weight 1.2kg (1200g). Respondent noted a 1/8 inch mass on the right side of the bird's face and a protruding cloaca. Respondent recommended blood tests, cultures and Harrison's pellet bird food – Complainants approved the diagnostics. Samples were collected and the bird was given a Vitamin AD injection – 0.15 (?)mL (route unknown).
3. Complainants stated that Respondent was disorganized and was unable to complete procedures without some difficulty which caused stress to the bird. The appointment lasted approximately two hours and staff tried to sell them outdated food after Respondent repeatedly asked them what type of food the bird was fed.
4. On August 12, 2019, Respondent stated that he contacted Complainants with results of blood test and get an update on the bird. He relayed that the blood results showed mild signs of stress which could be due to diet, husbandry, fear, or excitement. Also, the report analysis stated the bird may have an initial/low bacterial infection. The bird had been eating the recommended diet (Complainants' purchased online) but the stools were still loose. Respondent's tentative diagnosis was a viral cloacal papilloma, poor nutrition and possible secondary bacterial infection. The culture results were still pending at that time, therefore Respondent recommended continuing with the Harrison's food diet.
5. According to Complainants, Respondent called twice with no information, no lab results, only asking what the bird was eating.
6. On August 14, 2019 Respondent stated he called Complainants to inquire if the bird still had diarrhea. Mr. Johnson did not know and did not know if the bird still had the cloacal mass. He did say that the droppings were firm part of the day and other times they were loose.
7. Later that day, the culture results came in therefore Respondent called Complainants again to relay the results. The culture revealed – Klebsiella, E. Coli, and Pseudomonas. Possible treatments included Baytril and Piperacillin/Taz. Respondent felt the Piperacillin/Taz would have been a good choice but his supplier did not carry it therefore it would need to be special ordered and cost \$200 – 300. The fungal results were still not available and the bird's stools were improving, he advised Complainant to stay on the food and keep checking the droppings.
8. On August 19, 2019, Complainants called to ask for lab results. Respondent did not return her call. Other calls went unanswered and there was no voicemail.
9. On August 20, 2019, Complainants stated that out of frustration they requested the lab results to be sent to them. They were told the fungal results may be back that day and to call later. There was no answer when Complainants called at 4:00pm.
10. Later Respondent called Complainant after he called the lab and verbal results were given



to him over the phone; no growth. According to Complainant, Respondent's call made no sense as Respondent was rambling – he did mention possible cloaca carcinoma and the possibility of biopsies. Complainants then asked about the bacterial infection that she read on the results that were sent to them and getting antibiotics to treat the infection. Respondent advised that the bird would need to come in for injections daily. When asked about oral medication, Complainant was told it was very expensive. At this point, Complainant wanted to get a second opinion.

11. On August 23, 2019, the bird was presented to Dr. McCullough at Muleshoe Animal Clinic. The bird was examined and oral Orbax was dispensed and Silver Sulfadiazine Cream to apply to the cloaca.

12. On November 7, 2019, Respondent's after hour's voicemail was called. It does not contain the name, telephone number, and address of a veterinarian or veterinary medical premises that is available to provide veterinary medical services when Respondent's premises is not open for business as required per AAC R3-11-502 (B) (2).

### **COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:**

The Committee discussed that the medical records are very difficult to read which can be concerning, especially when the pet is seen by another veterinarian. Respondent cleared up which route of administration was used in the administration of the vitamin AD injection (IM).

There was some frustration on Complainants' part with respect to the ability to get the lab results. There were concerns with what the after hour voicemail relayed to clients calling when the premises was closed.

The Committee discussed that there appeared to be a difference of expectations of the visit and communication between Complainants and Respondent.

### **COMMITTEE'S PROPOSED CONCLUSIONS of LAW:**

The Committee concluded that no violations of the *Veterinary Practice Act* occurred.

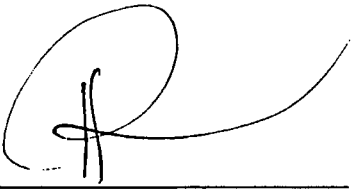
### **COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDED DISPOSITION:**

**Motion:** It was moved and seconded the Board:

*Dismiss this issue with no violation.*

**Vote:** The motion was approved with a vote of 5 to 0.

*The information contained in this report was obtained from the case file, which includes the complaint, the respondent's response, any consulting veterinarian or witness input, and any other sources used to gather information for the investigation.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'TRACY A. RIENDEAU', written over a horizontal line.

Tracy A. Riendeau, CVT  
Investigative Division